

Sharon Sassler

Web Bio

Information

Biography

Biographical Statement

Sharon Sassler is Professor in the Department of Policy Analysis and Management at Cornell University. She received her Ph.D. in Sociology from Brown University in 1995. She has taught at Wellesley College, Hunter College (CUNY), and The Ohio State University. She joined the Cornell faculty in 2005.

A social demographer, Sassler's research examines factors shaping the activities of young adults and their life course transitions into school and work, relationships, and parenthood, and how these transitions vary by gender, race/ethnicity, and social class. Some current projects explore the tempo of relationship progression, the processes underlying entrance into cohabiting unions and marriage, and the meanings cohabitators assign to their unions. She has also examined outcomes associated with becoming an unmarried mother (for mothers and their young adult offspring), and the impact of subsequent entrance into unions (marriage or cohabitation). Her most recent collaboration examines how family expectations and experiences shape the retention and promotion of women and minorities in science and technology (STEM) careers.

Teaching

Teaching and Advising Statement

Sassler teaches classes on family policy, race and public policy, immigration and the family, and an honors thesis seminar.

Professional

Current Professional Activities

Sassler is involved with the Cornell Population Center (CPC), and is Director of Undergraduate Studies for the Demography Minor at Cornell, and Co-Director of the Development Core of CPC. She is an active member of the Population Association of America (PAA), the American Sociological Association (ASA), and the Eastern Sociological Society (ESS). She is currently a Council Member for the ASA's Sociology of the Family section (2013-2016), and served as the Chair of the

Nominations Committee of the Population Section of the ASA (2013). From 2007-2010 she served on the Executive Committee of the ESS; during that time, she chaired the Candace Rogers Student Paper award (2010), and chaired the Mirra Komarovskiy Book Award (2009) for the ESS. She also regularly organizes sessions for the PAA and ASA meetings, has served on the Student Award Committee for the Population Section of the ASA, and has participated on the PAA program committee.

Sassler is a founding member of the Work and Family Researchers Network. She also was a team member of the Institute for Social Sciences Project on Immigration, titled "Settlement, Integration, and Membership" (2010-2013). During the Spring of 2013 she was a visiting fellow at the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI) in The Hague.

Research

Current Research Activities

Sassler has published extensively on topics relating to family formation and change, including studies of union formation (cohabitation, marriage) and the progression of romantic and sexual relationships, marriage among single mothers (both divorced and never married), and immigrant adaptation.

Her recent research projects examine how union formation and childbearing are associated with health and well-being, occupational attainment and job turn-over, and relationship quality. For example, she is concluding a collaborative project to assess the midlife health of unmarried mothers and the outcomes associated with entrance into marital or cohabiting unions. This project also examined how age at childbearing shapes health outcomes in mid-life, and various measures of well-being for the offspring of unmarried mothers, such as their health, educational attainment, and early childbearing.

Another stream of Sassler's research utilizes qualitative methods, specifically in-depth interviews with cohabiting couples (with partners interviewed separately) to better understand the processes involved with relationship progression and advancement, decisions about parenting and marriage, and how couples negotiate housework and paid work. This research reassesses the role that cohabitation serves in the family formation processes of contemporary young Americans. A particular emphasis is the important role that social class plays in differentiating the relationship processes of today's young adults. Additional research, drawing on nationally representative data sources, further extends the insights drawn from the qualitative research, exploring the tempo of relationship progression and its association with how partners assess the quality of their relationship.

A third research focus examines the occupational choices of women and men who majored in STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), exploring how family expectations, attitudes, and behaviors differentiates the occupational choice and retention of women and men. Using data from the National Science Foundation's SESTAT data, one NSF funded project assesses gender and race gaps in transitions into STEM occupations and the wages of those working in the STEM labor force. A second NSF funded project follows

STEM graduates prospectively for five years, assessing the factors determining transitions into and retention in STEM occupations.

Extension

Education

Education

1995-96. Post-Doctoral Fellowship, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Population Dynamics.

1995. Ph.D. Brown University. Sociology/Demography

1991. MA Brown University. Sociology/Demography

1984. BA Brandeis University. English & American Literature, Politics.

Courses

Courses Taught

PAM 2150: Research Methods

PAM 3360: Evolving Families: Challenges to Public Policy

PAM 3620: Population and Policy Debates in Comparative Perspective

PAM 3370: Race and Public Policy

PAM 4980: Honors Thesis Seminar

PAM 6360: Race, Immigration, and the Family

Websites

Administration

Administrative Responsibilities

I am the Development Core Director for the Cornell Population Center, and helped develop an undergraduate minor in Demography, for which I am the DUS. I also organized the Human Ecology component of the Cornell in Turin program, where we offer a 3 credit PAM course in Turin, Italy.

Publications

Selected Publications

Sharon Sassler and Amanda Miller. *Forthcoming*. "The Ecology of Relationships: The Effect of Meeting Patterns on Cohabiting Couples' Relationship Progression." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*.

Sharon Sassler and Amanda Miller. 2014. "We're Very Careful . . .": The Fertility Desires and Contraceptive Behaviors of Cohabiting Couples. *Family Relations*. 63(4): 538-553.

Daniel T. Lichter, Sharon Sassler, and Richard Turner. 2014. "Cohabitation, Post-Conception Unions, and the Rise in Nonmarital Fertility." *Social Science Research*. 47:134-147.

Sharon Sassler, Soma Roy, and Elizabeth Stasny. 2014. "Men's Economic Status and Marital Transitions of Fragile Families." *Demographic Research*. 30(3):71-110.

Jennifer Glass, Sharon Sassler, Yael Levitte, and Katherine Michelmore. 2013. "What's So Special about STEM? A Comparison of Women's Retention in STEM and Professional Occupations." *Social Forces*. 92(2):723-756.

Kristi Williams, Sharon Sassler, Adrienne Frech, Fenaba Addo, and Elizabeth Cooksey. 2013. "Mothers' Union Histories and the Mental & Physical Health of Adolescents Born to Unmarried Mothers." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 54 (3):278-295.

Kristi Williams, Sharon Sassler, Adrienne Frech, Fenaba Addo, and Elizabeth Cooksey. 2013. "Child and Adolescent Health and Well-Being." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. 54:277 (Policy Brief).

Sharon Sassler, Kristi Williams, Fenaba Addo, Adrienne, Frech, and Elizabeth Cooksey. 2013. "Family Structure and High School Graduation: How Children Born to Unmarried Mothers Fare." *GENUS: Journal of Population Sciences*, Vol. LXIX (No. 2), 1-33.

Amanda Miller and Sharon Sassler. 2012. "The Construction of Gender in Cohabiting Relationships." *Qualitative Sociology*. 35(4):427-446.

Sharon Sassler, Fenaba Addo, and Daniel T. Lichter. 2012. "The Tempo of Sexual Activity and Later Relationship Quality." *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 74, 708-725.

Amanda J. Miller, Sharon Sassler, and Dela Kus-Appouh. 2011. "The Specter of Divorce: Views from Working- and Middle-Class Cohabitators." *Family Relations*, 60(5):602-616.

Sharon Sassler and Kara Joyner. 2011. "Social Exchange and the Progression of Sexual Relationships in Emerging Adulthood." *Social Forces*. 90(1):223-245.

Kristi Williams, Sharon Sassler, Adrienne Frech, Fenaba Addo, and Elizabeth Cooksey. 2011. "Single Mothers, Union History, and Health at Midlife." *American Sociological Review* 76(3):465-486.

Sharon Sassler and Amanda J. Miller. 2011. "Class Differences in Cohabitation Processes." *Family Relations*, 60(2):163-177.

Sharon Sassler and Amanda J. Miller. 2011. "Waiting to Be Asked: Gender, Power, and Relationship Progression among Cohabiting Couples." *Journal of Family Issues*, 32(4):482-506.

Sharon Sassler and Amanda J. Miller. 2010. "Class Differences in Women's Family and Work Behaviors." *Journal of Civil Rights and Social Justice*, 16(2):349-367.

Amanda J. Miller and Sharon Sassler. 2010. "Stability and Change in the Division of Labor among Cohabiting Couples." *Sociological Forum*, 25(4):677-701. [[paper](#)]

Fenaba Addo and Sharon Sassler. 2010. "Financial Arrangements and Relationship Quality among Low-Income Couples." *Family Relations*, 59(4):408-423.

Sharon Sassler, Fenaba Addo, and Elizabeth Hartmann. 2010. "The Tempo of Relationship Progression among Low-Income Couples." *Social Science Research*. 39(5):831-844. [[paper](#)]

Daniel T. Lichter, Richard N. Turner, and Sharon Sassler. 2010. "National Estimates of the Rise in Serial Cohabitation." *Social Science Research*. 39(5):754-765. [[paper](#)]

Sharon Sassler. 2010. "Partnering Across the Life Course: Sex, Relationships, and Mate Selection." *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 72(3):557-575.